

Press Release



9TH June 2006
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Simply the Best

ONE of Darlington's most thriving community resource centres could be financially self-sufficient before the end of the decade thanks to a specialist grant, which is helping its manager become the best he can be.

The grant is paying for training to make Maidendale House manager Martin Landers into the most effective, knowledgeable and resourceful leader possible – which means the centre will reap the rewards of his skills in double-quick time.

Martin's training grant was awarded under County Durham Foundation's "Darlington Champions" campaign and is now paying for his place on a special 14-month leadership-training programme.

The programme – provided by the UK-wide Common Purpose scheme, which helps leaders of all types from all sectors of society – is equipping 38-year-old Martin with priceless skills, insights and professional networking connections to help him advance the cause of Maidendale House.

For example, one of Martin's chief aims for the future of Maidendale House, on Burnside Road, is to make it financially self-sufficient – and his training will give him new knowledge and contacts to make that happen.

Common Purpose brings together leaders from all kinds of voluntary, private and public-sector groups to share their knowledge, skills, insights and experience, broadening all their professional horizons and abilities.

And now Martin – who recently even held his wedding reception at Maidendale House – is confident that the knowledge and skills he is gaining will help him secure the centre's future.

"In short, this training empowers you, by giving a much wider view of how society works, where the powerbases are, who can help you get things done and where you can go for help," he said.

"You realise that professionals in other areas of work are actually your friends and are happy to help and support you, and that's a very valuable thing."

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Darlington Champions is helping a number of organisations in the town achieve their goals thanks to the charitable donations from local business.

County Durham Foundation hopes its Darlington Champions will help the foundation boost its endowment fund from £5 million to £10 million by 2010 and is appealing to more businesses, organisations and individuals to get involved.

Gillian Stacey, chief executive of County Durham Foundation, said: "As the Darlington Champion's fund grows we will be in a better position to help more organisations from the Darlington area. Our aim is to encourage local people and businesses to help the local community."

Martin Landers added: "Any organisation, be it a commercial organisation or a community group, is only as effective as the people in it.

"The more effective they can be, then the more effective their group will be, and that's how the organisation I represent will benefit.

"If you get the best possible people, then you get the best possible results - and that's what it's all about."

Maidendale House has recently received a major boost, by being designated as a "children's centre" under the Government's Sure Start support programme for families with young children who can benefit from support with issues such as reading skills.

Martin said that will soon mean an extension of the family and children support services on offer to the community – which will add to an already-extensive list of community services at Maidendale House.

The centre, which employs a team of 20 mainly part-time staff, already offers facilities including:

- a 52-place nursery and support play group, open five days a week;
- a credit union;
- a YMCA office, offering a back-to-work support programme;
- a healthy living centre and healthy eating café, supported by the Darlington Primary Care NHS Trust;
- a large local housing office, run by Darlington Council;
- a range of evening classes and fun groups for the full age range, from youngsters through to the over-60s.

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For further Information contact: Martin and his team at Maidendale House (Burnside Road, Darlington, County Durham, DL1 4SU), 01325 462 979.

For information on Darlington Champions contact Gillian Stacey or Kate Brown on 0191 383 0055.